

Message Text

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SUBJECT: FUEL CONSERVATION EFFORT PICKS UP STEAM

REF: MOSCOW 12830

1. SUMMARY: A FUEL CONSERVATION CAMPAIGN APPEARS TO BE IN THE OFFING. RECENTLY THE CENTRAL PRESS HAS CARRIED EDITORIALS ON THE NEED FOR FUEL ECONOMY AND FRONT-PAGE COVERAGE OF ABOVE-PLAN OUTPUT OF WEST SIBERIAN OIL AND DONBASS COAL. THE OBJECTIVE APPEARS TO BE TO CONVINCE PEOPLE THAT FUEL SUPPLIES MUST BE CAREFULLY MANAGED EVEN THOUGH PRODUCTION IS INCREASING. PRINCIPAL IMMEDIATE CONCERN REMAINS TO ENSURE INDUSTRY A STEADY FUEL SUPPLY IN UPCOMING FALL-WINTER MONTHS.
END SUMMARY.

2. ON AUGUST 30 PRAVDA PUBLISHED ITS SECOND EDITORIAL IN TWO WEEKS ON THE NEED FOR BETTER FUEL CONSERVATION MEASURES AND FOR INCREASED OUTPUT (SEE REFTTEL). EARLIER THIS WEEK, THE CENTRAL PRESS GAVE PROMINENT FRONT-PAGE COVERAGE TO THREE FUEL-RELATED DEVELOPMENTS:
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(1) THAT THE TYUMEN OIL FIELDS OF WEST SIBERIA HAD ALREADY PRODUCED

1.8 MILLION TONS OF OIL ABOVE 1976 PLAN TARGET AND THAT A NEW GOAL FOR THE YEAR OF 2.8 MILLION TONS ABOVE-PLAN HAD BEEN SET, AN INCREASE OF 800,000 TONS, (2) THAT DONBASS COAL PRODUCTION WOULD EXCEED PLAN TARGETS BY 1.1 MILLION TONS THIS YEAR, 100,000 TONS MORE THAN SET AT THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR, AND (3) THAT THE MOSCOW REGIONAL POWER ADMINISTRATION (MOSENERGO) HAD EXCEEDED TARGETS FOR FUEL CONSERVATION. A CONGRATULATORY LETTER ON ALL THREE ACHIEVEMENTS UNDER GENERAL-SECRETARY BREZHNEV'S SIGNATURE HIGHLIGHTED THE COVERAGE.

3. THE LATEST EDITORIAL QUOTED BREZHNEV'S PRAISE OF THE "PATRIOTIC INITIATIVE" OF THE THREE ENERGY-PRODUCING ENTITIES AND HIS CONFIDENCE THAT ENERGY PRODUCER AND OTHER BRANCHES WOULD GIVE THEM "BROAD SUPPORT". IT EMPHASIZED THAT THE MAIN TASK WAS TO CREATE THE NECESSARY CONDITIONS FOR THE "SMOOTH FUNCTIONING" OF ALL SECTORS OF THE ECONOMY IN THE FALL-WINTER MONTHS. MEASURES TO ACHIEVE THIS GOAL IN THE OIL INDUSTRY INCLUDE: SPEEDIER DRILLING WORK AND BRINGING NEW FIELDS INTO PRODUCTION, OBTAINING GREATER YIELDS FROM OLDER FIELDS, AND FASTER INTRODUCTION OF THE LATEST TECHNIQUES. COAL PRODUCTION COULD BE IMPROVED THROUGH BROADER USE OF THE "BRIGADE" OF-THE-THOUSANDS" LABOR ORGANIZATION TECHNIQUE AND REDUCING IDLE TIME OF MACHINERY AND EQUIPMENT. SEVERAL POWER STATIONS, NOT FURTHER SPECIFIED, ARE CRITICIZED FOR NOT REACHING RATED CAPACITY ON SCHEDULE AND FOR EXCEEDING NORMS OF FUEL CONSUMPTION PER UNIT OF OUTPUT.

4. THE EDITORIAL ENDS WITH A PLEA FOR INCREASED OUTPUT AND FOR FUEL ECONOMY AT ALL LEVELS AND SECTORS OF THE ECONOMY WITH THE EFFORT TO BE LED BY PARTY ORGANIZATIONS. IT ADDS THAT A "LARGE ROLE" IN THIS MATTER WILL ALSO BE PLAYED BY THE "PRESS, RADIO, AND TELEVISION."

5. COMMENT: THE RECENT PRESS PLAY ON FUEL-RELATED SUBJECTS SUGGESTS THE BEGINNINGS OF A BROADER CAMPAIGN AIMED IMMEDIATELY AT PREVENTING SERIOUS FUEL SHORTAGES THIS WINTER AND OVER THE LONGER TERM AT ENHANCED FUEL CONSERVATION EFFORTS EVEN AS PRODUCTION INCREASES. INDEED, THE APPEARANCE OF TWO PRAVDA EDITORIALS ON FUEL WITHIN TWO WEEKS ARGUES THAT THE SIGNAL FOR A BROADER MEDIA EFFORT HAS APPARENTLY NOW BEEN GIVEN. THE SUCCESS

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OF "VOLUNTARY" MEASURES, HOWEVER, SEEMS SOMEWHAT DUBIOUS PARTICULARLY WHEN THE EFFECT OF PUBLISHED APPEALS TO CONSERVE FUEL IS DIMINISHED BY THE EVER-PRESENT REFERENCES TO THE TREMENDOUS GROWTH IN OUTPUT OF USSR FUEL IN THE LAST 10-15 YEARS.
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